

LTJG [REDACTED]

Below is a summary of interview of LTJG [REDACTED] USCG, conducted by the AIM informal board on August 21, 2006 concerning the diving incident which resulted in two deaths on August 17, 2006. AIM board members present at the interview were Captain [REDACTED] LCDR [REDACTED], and LCDR [REDACTED]

LTJG [REDACTED] stated that he had been aboard CGC HEALY for [REDACTED] reporting aboard in the summer of [REDACTED]. He is currently assigned to HEALY, he is the [REDACTED] aboard HEALY. He serves in the ISC Clinic while the ship is in port, and aboard HEALY when the ship is underway.

LTJG [REDACTED] primary duty is as HEALY's [REDACTED]. He also serves as a member of the morale committee, ship's safety board, and is a qualified JOOD and break-in underway OOD.

During HEALY's summer 2005 Arctic deployment, LT HILL (then LTJG NOEL), asked him to assist with diving operations, as a dive tender. LTJG [REDACTED] agreed and served as a tender on several surface supplied dive operations, working from the ship's LCVP. He stated that his role was to dress divers, and tend the line while divers were in the water. He has never tended lines for a diver on a scuba tank. LTJG [REDACTED] did not complete PQS, but stated that he did receive on the job training. He was never given, and does not possess, a qualification letter.

LTJG [REDACTED] stated that during the summer 2006 Arctic deployment there were no dive operations prior to 17 August 2006. He stated that a few weeks before the incident, LT HILL had tried to get a dive operation approved, and had asked him to be a tender again. The dive was not approved, and LT HILL expressed frustration to him regarding the inability to schedule a dive operation during the trip, thus far. At this point the ship had been underway for approximately two months.

On 17 August 2006, the ship hove to for ice liberty, after about 5 weeks of science work. LTJG [REDACTED] was told by LT HILL that there would be a dive operation during liberty, and requested his help as a tender. LT HILL explained to LTJG [REDACTED] that all three divers would dive so they could conduct training. LTJG [REDACTED] stated that he asked her if there would be a dive supervisor on the ice, to which she replied "nope." LTJG [REDACTED] was not told of the dive operation before the day of the dive.

LTJG [REDACTED] stated that no pre-dive meeting or brief was held, but that they had a quick "huddle" on the ice to review line pull signals and start moving equipment to the ice. He stated that he was instructed to give "one pull for 'ok', two pulls for 'down', three pulls for 'take in slack' and four pulls for 'danger.'" While they were getting equipment ready, in the dive locker, LTJG [REDACTED] stated that BM2 DUQUE was having problems with his buoyancy compensation device (BCD). BM2 DUQUE told him that "it was not working, but that he was going to fix it." Further, BM2 DUQUE stated that "he wasn't sure whether he would use the BCD or not." A short while later BM2 DUQUE took his dive

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equipment to the ice, and waited for the other divers. BM2 DUQUE, wearing his dry suit, found a spot near the bow of ship, to lay down and wait.

Once all divers were on the ice, several other crew members also came over to take pictures and talk. ENS [REDACTED] and DC3 [REDACTED] were also pulled in to help tend the divers. They held another quick huddle to determine that LTJG [REDACTED] would tend BM2 DUQUE, DC3 [REDACTED] would tend LT HILL and ENS [REDACTED] would tend ENS [REDACTED].

At approximately 1830 or 1840 all three divers entered the water. The divers began doing equipment checks on the surface of the water. Shortly after entering the water ENS [REDACTED] came back out of the water. LTJG [REDACTED] stated that ENS [REDACTED] had a leaky dry suit, and thus aborted the dive. ENS [REDACTED] returned to the ship to change clothes. Shortly thereafter, BM2 DUQUE complained of cold hands. He too was hauled back out of the water. His gloves were removed and LTJG [REDACTED] attempted to warm BM2 DUQUE's hands. LTJG [REDACTED] stated that the tenders placed new lining in BM2 DUQUE's gloves, and dried BM2 DUQUE's hands which had become slightly wet. LTJG [REDACTED] stated that during the previous summer divers had found a fix for cold hands by placing surgical tube in the gloves to vent warm air from the dry suit. This was not done on this occasion.

BM2 DUQUE was still having buoyancy problems, and said that he was "too light." BM2 DUQUE asked for additional weight. LTJG [REDACTED] said that BM2 DUQUE asked for 8 pounds on both sides. That exact combination was not available so he took 8 pounds on one side and 7 pounds on the other, in addition to whatever weight he already had. LTJG [REDACTED] did not note the time the two remaining divers eventually submerged, but stated it was about 15 minutes after they were both in the water.

Initially the divers stayed near the surface, at a depth of maybe 10 or 15 feet. There was a moderate strain on the tending line, which he said was normal based on his previous experience. LTJG [REDACTED] stated that he understood the divers were going to do some training and familiarization, then return to pick up the dive camera. After a short while, the divers started swimming away from the tenders, toward the ice edge opposite the side of the whole from which they entered. At this time there was still a moderate strain on the line, and a scientist from the science party was standing on a back bight of the line, but immediately stepped off.

Due to a reflection from the sun, LTJG [REDACTED] said he lost visual contact with the divers right before they swam under the ice edge opposite the dive side, but that he's pretty sure that's where they went based on the direction the line was tending and their last known direction. The dive was still normal at that time.

Two or three minutes after crossing under the ice, LTJG [REDACTED] said an "alarming strain" was felt on BM2 DUQUE's line. The line sped away in a "fast and forceful" manner. There was no way to give a line pull signal in either direction as the line ran out. It felt as if the divers were "fining" hard under the ice. The line continued to run for 10 to 15

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seconds at a high rate of speed, then slowed slightly for a few seconds, then continued to pay out even faster than before. LTJG [REDACTED] said that this was particularly alarming as the dive was supposed to be limited to 20 feet. It was hard to tell how much line was paying out, but it appeared to be well over 100 feet. In his experience this was the "biggest uncontrolled pay out" he had ever seen. Fearing that something was wrong, he fought back to stop the line from running. He gave a max pull, and despite his large size (over 220 lbs), he was not able to get the line in control and asked for assistance from nearby crewmembers. MK1 [REDACTED] came forward to assist, took hold of the line, and said "I can't hold it." With the help of MK1 [REDACTED], LTJG [REDACTED] was able to assume a "tug of war" position and the two were able to begin to slow the line. By this time the line began to tend downward. Bubbles were visible on the opposite side of the open area.

LTJG [REDACTED] said that DC3 [REDACTED] yelled over that he was nearly out of line on LT HILL's spool. He was also getting help to stop his line from running out. LTJG [REDACTED] said he was also running low on line, but now had the line under control. When the line finally stopped, he gave a one pull signal that was not answered. He said it felt like a "dead weight" was on the end of the line - by this time no bubbles were visible. The line was now tending straight up and down. Around this point, BMCS [REDACTED] and ENS [REDACTED] arrived on scene.

With three or four people on each line they began to pull the divers back up. The lines were tending vertical in the water at this time. LTJG [REDACTED] gave a cadence to the two teams to pull the divers up slowly in control. This went on for some time. Eventually, the divers came into sight. LT HILL was seen first at about 25-30 feet below the surface: she was not moving, no bubbles were coming from her mask, and her line was slightly tangled around her air tank. BM2 DUQUE was visible shortly afterward: he was not moving, and no bubbles were coming from his mask.

BMCS [REDACTED] instructed the teams to pull the divers up quickly. The two teams hauled both divers out of the water. Both divers had bloody froth in and outside of their masks. There was no response, respiration, or pulse from either diver. LTJG [REDACTED] checked LT HILL's eyes and found both dilated. BM2 [REDACTED]'s eyes were bulging and swollen. LTJG [REDACTED] stated that he immediately thought both divers had suffered from an embolism, and needed to be placed in the recompression chamber. LTJG [REDACTED] ran onboard HEALY and asked EM1 [REDACTED] to help get the chamber set up. The stretcher bearers began basic CPR and to transport both divers to sickbay.

Once in sickbay, LTJG [REDACTED] began the treatment protocol for ACLS. It was difficult to intubate either diver. BM2 DUQUE's pulse ox was 70%. Both divers were being administered CPR, and he gave both two shots of epinephrine and one shot of atropine, per the protocol. About 20 minutes after arriving in sickbay, a flight surgeon was patched in on the phone. The connection was lost several times due to the distance from shore. LTJG [REDACTED] took all available steps per the protocol and flight surgeons instructions to revive the divers. The chamber was eventually set up, but could not be used on a non-responsive diver. After an hour, there was no change to the condition of

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either diver. Upon exhausting all possible remedies, LTJG [REDACTED] excused all non-medical personnel from the room, and with the concurrence of the flight surgeon, declared both divers to be dead.

In response to questions, LTJG [REDACTED] noted the following: Both divers physicals are believed to be current, and signed by a medical doctor. [REDACTED]

LTJG [REDACTED] never saw any written checklist used prior to, or during the dive. There was no one "in charge" on the dive side. The supervisor was in the water. Each tender tended his own line, but no one had the overall picture. Eventually SCPO [REDACTED] took charge, but did not have a dive background.

LTJG [REDACTED] attended the U.S. Navy Dive Recognition and Treatment two week course in January 2005. He did not have any formal hyperbaric chamber training, but had undergone basic familiarity training a year earlier given by LT HILL aboard HEALY. He did not know who did maintenance on the chamber, or who (other than LT HILL) knew how to operate it.

There is no dive medical or evacuation plan as far as he knows, nor is there a list of contacts beyond the flight surgeon. No one has called the International Divers Alert Network (DAN) that he is aware of, either during or after the incident.

LTJG [REDACTED] said no ORM was conducted. He is familiar with ORM from boat operations.

LTJG [REDACTED] PA-C
USCG

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